

Why Adversity Can Be Good - Acts 13:4-12 - January 27th, 2008

- In verses 1-3, Paul and Barnabas, by the Holy Spirit, are sent out from the church in Antioch on this their first missionary journey.
- In the verses that follow Luke records details in his narrative of their great successes, alongside the great adversity that accompanied it.
- To me, the text before us, is recorded for us, as a reminder to us, that blessings can actually come both with and from adversity.

1. Advancement can come from inconvenient (Verses 4-5)

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.
v4 Barnabas and Saul are sent by the Holy Spirit and went from Seleucia to Cyprus which happens to be where Barnabas is from.
v5 When they arrive in Salamis, they preach the Word in Jewish synagogues with John Mark there helping them.
- At first glance, one might miss how inconvenient this is. They were sent from this thriving church in Antioch, and went into the unknown.
- Paul and Barnabas' willingness to inconvenience themselves led to the planting of new churches and the advancement of the Gospel.

It May Not Be Convenient - What must our Lord think of us if His work and His witness depend upon the convenience of His people? The truth is that every advance that we make for God and for His cause must be made at our inconvenience. If it does not inconvenience us at all, there is no cross in it! ... Was there ever a cross that was convenient? Was there ever a convenient way to die? I have never heard of any, and judgment is not going to be a matter of convenience, either! Yet we look around for convenience, thinking we can reach the mountain peak conveniently and without trouble or danger to ourselves. Actually, mountain climbers are always in peril and they are always advancing at their inconvenience.

A.W. Tozer Tozer Daily Devotional, January 23rd

2. Opportunity can come from opposition (Verses 6-8)

6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.
v6 They traveled the whole island until they come to Paphos where they meet this sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus.
v7 Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man wanted to hear God's Word first hand from Barnabas and Saul in spite of Elymas' opposition.
v8 This sorcerer opposes them and tries to turn the proconsul from the faith because he is threatened by the truth and could lose his job.

"Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success. A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives *against* his kite."

(Charles Spurgeon)

3. Salvation can come from confrontation (Verses 9-12)

9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

v9 The Apostle Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looks eyeball to eyeball at this Elymas and confronts him straight up and head on.
v10 Paul tells him that he is a child of the devil, an enemy of everything right, and full of all kinds of deceit, trickery, and perversion.

"We are not to seek some kind of ecumenical dialogue with false teachers, liberals, and men who distort the Bible. We are to expose them for what they are. The church is weak today because of its desire to compromise rather than confront."

John Phillips, Exploring Acts, Volume 2, p256

"The severest words of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, are reserved for those who stand between men and truth, for those who stand between men and God . . . It must be the heart that loves Sergius Paulus that speaks in anger to Elymas the sorcerer."

(G. Campbell Morgan)

v11 He tells him that God's hand is against him, and that he will be blind for a time, then immediately he becomes blind looking for help.
v12 When this proconsul sees what happens, he believed, not because of the miracle, but because he was amazed at the teaching.

"Some are concerned because there are not more miracles and wonders wrought in our midst through faith. In our day, everything is commercialized. And I must say that I do not believe in commercialized miracles. ... I have my doubts about signs and wonders that have to be organized, that demand a letterhead and a president and a big trailer with lights and cameras. ... The preacher who will dare to stand and let his preaching cost him something--God is in that. The Christian who is willing to put herself in a place where she must get the answer from God and God alone--the Lord is in that!"

January 24th A. W. Tozer Devotional from "Faith Beyond Reason," pp 33, 34

Closing thoughts to ponder...

1. We're not told any details about Seleucia, Cyprus, or Salamis, only Paphos of all places. Paphos, was an evil place steeped in the worship of the sex goddess Venus. ***This isn't recorded to tell us how bad they were, but how good God is.***
2. Isn't it interesting that the first recorded convert on this first missionary journey is an intelligent man, so much so that he seeks first hand information about Jesus? ***We don't have to assassinate our intellect in order to accept Christ as our Savior.***
3. Perhaps Paul tells Elymas he's going to be blind for a time so he will see the truth about Jesus, like he himself was blind for three days when realizing the truth about Jesus. ***God may choose to use the similarity of our experiences in the lives of others.***
4. Notice that it wasn't the miraculous blinding of this Elymas that brought Serguis Paulus to salvation but rather, he was amazed at the teaching of God's Word. ***It's not usually powerful signs and wonders that win people to Christ it's the power of God's Word.***